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WASHINGTON STAR-NEWS
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Young's Federal Spotlight

Will OMB Directive Mean More Contracting Out?

By Joseph Young
Star-News Staff Writer

The White House's Office of Management and Budget has issued a directive to government agencies which federal personnel officials and unionists interpret as encouraging more contracting out of federal activities performed by civil servants.

Signed by OMB Director Roy Ash, the directive appears much less firm against contracting out work to industry than previous OMB policy directives on the subject.

The directive was issued in conjunction with President Nixon's recent order to

government agencies to reduce employment below the levels originally set for this fiscal year.

After detailing the usual instructions about hiring only for essential job vacancies, using attrition to eliminate unfilled jobs, and so forth, the OMB directive states:

"Contracts with private firms or individuals should not be used inappropriately solely as a means of reducing employment."

This contrasts sharply with the wording of previous OMB directives which flatly forbade any contracting out that was designed to get around employment

ceilings or as a way of offsetting federal job cuts.

One top Defense personnel official said of the OMB directive: "It lacks force. It will have the effect of encouraging agencies to increase their contracting out of manpower services and other functions."

Bun Bray, executive director of the National Association of Supervisors, Federal Government, commented that "I'm afraid this is going to jeopardize a lot of federal career jobs."

At a time when the government is undergoing reductions in force, stepping out contracting out would threaten many more thou-

sands of federal employee jobs. . . .

LESS OPTIMISM—Civil Service Commission officials are less optimistic than they were a week ago that President Nixon will approve an Oct. 1 federal white-collar pay raise.

While they still have hopes that he will, they say they won't be at all surprised if he delays it until Jan. 1. The raise is expected to be 4.77 percent.

The administration is split wide open on the issue. While the CSC favors an Oct. 1 effective date, some powerful officials in the administration are urging a

Jan. 1 effective date on the President.

The CSC argues that an Oct. 1 effective date pay system for federal white-collar pay raises, which would close the gap with industry pay surveys to six months instead of the present nine months, was supposed to have gone into effect several years ago.

On the other hand, other administration officials argue that two federal pay raises in one year would violate national wage guidelines and could trigger even more inflation.

Nixon is expected to make his decision within the next day or two. If he intends to

delay the pay raise to Jan. 1, he must submit this message with an alternate plan calling for the Jan. 1 date to Congress not later than Friday midnight.

BIG DEAL—The General Accounting Office, which frequently has to ride herd on federal programs costing billions of dollars, recently issued a decision awarding \$3.50 to a federal employee who claimed he was owed that amount in additional per diem expenses resulting from an official trip to Vietnam.

AMC CUTS—There are reports that the Army Materiel Command will suffer a 10 percent cut in civilian jobs effective Feb. 1. This would mean eliminating 300 of the agency's 3,000 jobs.

AMC personnel officials say they know nothing of any job cut plans. At any rate the cutback reports are rife throughout the agency. AMC officials owe it to the employees to make a definite statement one way or the other regarding employment plans and their future job security.

LABOR RELATIONS POSTS—Harold Kessler has been named deputy director of the Federal Labor Relations Council. Kessler has

been chief of the council's program division since Jan. 1972 . . . S. Jesse Reuben has been appointed deputy director of the Office of Federal Labor-Management Relations. He has served as assistant director of the division of operations in the FLMR since 1971.

NEW BOOKLET—The League of Federal Recreation Associations has published a new edition of its booklet detailing cut-rates on merchandising and services available to its members. For further information call 484-9371 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

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WASHINGTON STAR-NEWS

Washington, D. C., Wednesday, August 29, 1973



Cramer's 9 to 4:30

By John Cramer

Star-News Staff Writer

A major new suit by the AFL-CIO American Federation of Government Employees challenges the Air Force Department's right to go forward with its program of replacing federal employe guards and custodial employees with contract workers.

It was filed on behalf of 77 janitors recently given lay-off notices at Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, so that their jobs can be taken over at very low pay rates by contract employees of a private company.

The suit rests primarily on two provisions of the Veterans Preference Act:

- One guarantees qualified military veterans first chance at "guard, elevator operator, messenger and custodian" jobs.

- The other says veterans must be the last to go in federal layoffs.

The Civil Service Commission has ruled — and the suit sharply questions the ruling — that employees losing their jobs to contract workers are ineligible for its feeble layoff appeals procedures.

But the suit has a couple other major prongs, too.

One is a Defense Department directive, based in part on Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76, which is supposed to control "contracting out" by U.S. agencies. The directive says that contracting must not be used — as it clearly was at Randolph — as a device for avoiding government salary minimums.

The other goes to the 1966 Service Contract Act, which obliges the secretary of Labor to give prior approval to agency contracts for

personal services . . . to certify that the contract employees are not being paid sub-standard rates . . . and to further attest that government rates were taken into account in arriving at his certification.

The AFGE suit, filed in U.S. District Court in San Antonio, alleges that the Labor secretary failed to comply with this requirement.

The Air Force is in the midst of a department-wide program to replace janitorial workers with contract employees. In the D.C. area, this recently has cost the

jobs of many Civil Service janitors, including veterans and widows of veterans, at both Bolling and Andrews Air Force Bases.

A STRANGE THING happened to tentative federal employe pay raise proposals on their way to the President.

Administration experts, who have been insisting — short of final recommendation — that the coming raise for government's 1.1 million white collar employees, including the more than 300,000 in the D.C. area, should be 4.7 percent, discovered

an error in their mathematics as of Monday.

So now they're talking 4.77 — call it 4.8 percent for round-figure purposes.

After the new delay, the expert's formal recommendation is scheduled to go to the White House today.

D.C. GOVERNMENT employees, using some 460 parking spaces in squares 490 and 499 near the Municipal Center and roughly 40 in the Great Plaza behind the District Building, find all sorts of inequities in a recent order hiking their parking fees from \$5 to \$25,

\$30, \$35 per month, effective Sept. 1.

And they also suggest that if the order sticks — it was inspired by the City Council in an effort to raise more revenue — the many federal employes using Great Plaza spaces soon can expect steep hikes in their fees. Some pay nothing; others up to \$7.50 a month.

The 500 affected D.C. employes, though conceding that some fee increase is justified, see themselves singled out for what they

regard as special mistreatment.

They point to a recent D.C. survey which showed commercial parking rates averaging \$18 to \$22 per month. They also point to the free parking available to other D.C. workers in the lot behind 499 Pennsylvania Ave. . . in the basement of the Municipal Center . . . for D.C. Motor Pool employees . . . many police and firemen . . . most teachers . . . and hundreds of others.

That's only part of their story. It comes through as a strong one to which the City Council ought to listen.

Commuters Fume at Reston Tie-Up

By Thomas Love
Star-News Staff Writer

Federal workers commuting to the new \$44 million Geological Survey Building in far-flung Reston are fuming over what they say is up to an hour's wait to get out of the parking lot at the new building.

The main lot has only two exits, both disgorging onto Reston Avenue, a two-lane road already heavily traveled by commuters from the new town in the western reaches of Fairfax County.

The result is monumental traffic snarls which prolong the commuting day with aggravating waits for many of the 800 workers already in the new building — the vanguard of 2,400 to come.

Frustrated workers have alerted Rep. Joel T. Broyhill, R-Va., in whose district the problem resides, and yesterday he called together representatives of six federal agencies as well as of Gulf-Reston to consider a solution.

Some 233 of the 800 Geological Survey employees signed a petition that brought Broyhill into the matter. Reston residents caught in the snarls also are displeased.

The problem, says Broyhill, results from a massive absence of planning by government officials. There was no transportation plan devised for the facility and no move to coordinate the issue with the Virginia Department of Highways before or during construction, he said.

At this point in time, there are 750 parking permits issued for the 800 employees at the new building, and efforts to encourage car pools have not been overwhelmingly successful.

Beyond that there are only two buses a day to the new building, it was noted at the meeting, and these originate in downtown Washington, far from where most of the Geological Survey employees live.

Ed Grant, assistant director of administration for the agency, said yesterday that these two buses carry a total of 26 people. He added that "seven or eight more buses are aborning," but said he had no idea when they could be put into service. A representative of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, which operates the area buslines, did not feel suffi-

cient equipment would be available in the near future for such contract routes.

Broyhill asked the Department of Transportation to authorize commuter use of the Dulles access road "on a temporary basis." He conceded, however, that he was not optimistic since "I've been through this over and over again." The highway access is reserved for airport use only although special ramps for buses only to and from Reston Avenue were opened last month.

Grant said the Geological Survey is studying staggered work hours and the possibility of eliminating specific hours altogether and allowing people to work any eight-hour period during the day.

But nothing has been decided yet, he told Broyhill, and little has been accomplished to resolve the problem.

The recurring traffic snarls are the second major difficulty encountered by the Federal agency in its move to the suburban setting. Earlier, there was a go-round with county authorities over fire safety standards in the new building which eventually was solved.